



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Today, June 20th, World Refugee Day, the international community recognizes and sounds a clarion call concerning the human suffering of people forcibly displaced and compelled to leave their own countries and those who remain within their country's territorial confines. As the end of the first decade of the 21st Century looms, we are witnessing a worldwide displacement crisis precipitated by multiple origins of instigation, including human made disasters like war and development projects and natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Today, people internally displaced within their own countries as result of human made or natural disaster far outnumber those of refugees. While the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have classified 8 million people as refugees, 23 million people have been identified internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of conflict and 25 million have been displaced due to natural disasters. However, internally displaced persons have received considerably less international attention and have no international agency mandated to address their special concerns and vulnerabilities.

In 2005, the world witnessed a natural disaster that instigated the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents throughout the United States. This event triggered a major humanitarian disaster, a lackluster response by local, state and national agencies and produced one of the largest IDP communities in the Hemisphere. Today, thousands of Gulf Coast residents continue to be displaced and continue to confront considerable challenges in the areas of employment, health, and education; and the national government has largely failed to comply with the "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement." Thus, nearly two years after the disaster, the human suffering continues. Therefore, as we recognize the plight of the world's displaced, we also want to acknowledge and address the concerns of the U.S.'s internally displaced population. The US Human Rights Network appeals to the U.S. government and the international community, to provide greater oversight to ensure human rights are respected and ensure assistance to thousands of internally displaced Gulf Coast residents as they continue to confront considerable challenges in the return, resettlement and reintegration process.

The US Human Rights Network is a coalition of more than 230 U.S.-based organizations and 1,100 individuals working on the full spectrum of human rights issues. For more information on our Hold the U.S. Accountable: Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)-Human Rights Campaign, please visit our website: www.ushrnetwork.org.